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Sounding Off: Carrollton-Farmers Branch readers tell us what they think of the role tolls play in transportation funding



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What do you think of the role tolls play in transportation funding in Texas?

Mary Croix Ludwick, Farmers Branch: I am very disappointed in the process of creating every major road into a toll road. Our taxes should pay for the highways we use. It feels like double taxation to me. If a road is made a toll road, then there should be an expiration date to the tolls (such as we had on the Dallas to Fort Worth toll road). Additionally, the plan for tolls on LBJ is just insane. To register within a hour of using the road for the discount fee for several in the car (HOV rate) is inconvenient and not realistic. Changing the fee, with the customer not knowing ahead of time, is offensive to me. I have plans to never use the LBJ toll lanes.

Connie Martin, Farmers Branch: There are so many newcomers moving into Texas and Dallas, both from the north and from the south that our favorite state is nearly swamped. More water is needed, apartments are being built in every vacant lot, grocery stores are on every corner and the economy needs help. Since cars nearly outnumber people let the tolls begin. Those of us who can't work tolls into our budgets will find other ways to get there.

Irene Wright, Farmers Branch: I think these tolls are just an excuse to use the gas tax for whatever other things the Legislature wants. Also, foreign countries build them and they make a profit. Spain I think is the main country. So the roads, I think, do not belong to us. I believe our gas tax money should be used for the purpose designated —building and maintaining our roads and highways.

Martha Joe Thrasher, Carrollton: This is probably a good change for busy drivers. They need to have a valid toll tag in order to more easily make use of the changed lanes – probably not a problem for most of them.

Curtis W. Miller, Farmers Branch: I've been opposed to toll roads ever since the Dallas North Tollway did not become a free road when the bonds were paid off, as the DFW Turnpike was. Yes, I know they rolled the bonds over and extended the road, but the people weren't consulted. The NTTA, in their vaunted wisdom, decided for them.

I will admit the contractor has done a good job of managing the chaos that the LBJ project could have become. And I'm sure the road will be top notch. But seeing the pricing as it was originally touted was prohibitive, and undoubtedly underestimated, I decided long ago to avoid it all. I take a cruise on some weekends to see the progress of the build out. Amazing engineering.

On principle, I hate the idea, and the fact that the people weren't consulted, just the "paid-off-by-lobbyist politicians," and *The Dallas Morning News*, of course. Typical.

David Borland, Carrollton: I seldom use the toll roads, and even avoid the free LBJ lanes most of the time. I would think they are great if they would become state-owned as soon as the bonds are paid off — like I-30 was between Dallas and Fort Worth. I can appreciate that gasoline taxes must go up if we are to continue to build and maintain free roads everywhere, but I think the increase in taxes would be less than the tolls charged.

Garrv Sisco, Carrollton: Tolls today are out of control. They have become more of a means of politicians rewarding certain donors or

constituents than financing for roadways. Roads could be financed with gasoline taxes as always. But Texas politicians are afraid of the word "tax" and seem to be in love with the word "toll." As long as the voters are too distracted to see that toll equals tax, this situation will continue.

That is very sad. Much of the toll money will be diverted to enrich the folks building and maintaining the roads. Drivers will see ever-increasing tolls and ever-decreasing roadway quality. This will likely be especially true for remains of free lanes. Those unwilling or unable to afford the tolls will be forced to drive slower and through worse conditions. Tolls will soon be maximized and maintenance minimized.

Harold Simmons, Carrollton: First of all, the new system is confusing and will have people more focused on what lane to get into rather than keeping their eyes on the traffic around them. Second, until they find some effective way to collect the users who refuse to pay the invoices they receive, the actual funding from fees will not have a great effect on toll-road financing. Look at the super toll road between Austin and San Antonio. It is almost bankrupt, and there is no real solution in sight.

Richard Broberg, Dallas: There are several ways to deal with the dysfunctional highway system in Dallas. One way is to just pave over everything; that would ensure enough pavement for all cars. Another way is to tear everything up and start over again. These two methods are obviously not quite possible. A third way is to prevent people from leaving their dysfunctional states and coming to Texas. By not letting them in, that would signal them that maybe they should stay home and un-dysfunctionalize their own state. Obviously this option cannot be implemented. If we can't keep illegal immigrants out of Texas, how can we keep citizens from coming into Texas and making this state dysfunctional? The only sane solution is to stop building new roads and pour all the money into suburb-to-city mass transportation. If all the cars commuting from suburb to city are taken off of the roads, there will be no need to build new roads. Mass transportation works in other cities and countries; maybe it doesn't work in Texas because of dysfunctional politicians.

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